

# Life, Loss and Love

By Chana Kotzin, Ph.D

Sometimes a life seems to hold more than one lifetime's experiences, especially when unexpected twists change the way we supposed we would live, and our eventual lives take us to very different destinations. The papers of Rudy and Hilde Miller reveal pivotal themes of family and friendship, against the backdrop of international events of the 1930s and 1940s, and life both before and after this period. As significantly, these papers reveal two lives that came together in extraordinary circumstances that neither of them could have predicted or planned. Through these papers we learn about refugee and immigrant lives, the Holocaust and Americanization, and at the very personal level we are reminded of life's possibilities as well as its fragility.



Hilde Mueller [later Hilde Miller], third row, standing second from left, Breezy Hill, NY. Rudy and Hilde Miller Papers, University Archives, University at Buffalo

Rudy Miller known as Rudolph Salomon Windmüller at birth was born on June 4, 1903 to parents Karl and Emma Spier Windmüller in Duisburg-Beeck, a town near Gelsenkirchen in Nordrhein, Westphalia, Germany. The Windmüllers made their home in Gelsenkirchen where they had a store which bore the family name of Windmüller. Involved in many social and sporting groups, his photograph albums from the 1920s display a carefree life spent with friends and family. This all changed during the 1930s, as it did for many German Jews, with the rise of Hitler and Nazism. From 1937, the papers show the necessity of permits for Jews making the smallest journey, and they also show how passage to Cuba, enabled a new life in Buffalo, NY. The papers document Rudy Miller's attempts to bring out his immediate family, including his mother Emma and his sister Hildegard's family. Much of these letters are in German, handwritten on delicate onionskin. A few documents show Rudy's work with Maisel furniture,

as well as his musical interests as part of the Jewish Community Center Orchestra.

Hilde Miller, nee Mueller [Müller], was born in Siegburg, Nordrhein, Westphalia, Germany on September 24, 1913, to parents Leo and Adele Müller. Also part of the Müller household was Adele Müller's brother, Edward Fröhlich, who worked in a tanning business connected to the shoe store, L. Fröhlich, Schuhwaren-Haus, which Leo Müller managed. The Müller's were very active in their synagogue and community. But as with the Windmüllers, increasing anti-Semitic legislation associated with Nazism forced many changes, and they had to close their shoe store. In the meantime, they searched for ways to provide a future for their daughter, Hilde, outside of Germany. Through their efforts, and those of a British rabbi, Hilde secured a UK domestic visa just after Kristallnacht in 1938. It was then that Hilde began her life in the home of Max and Miriam Waldenberg. This began a long association with a couple and their small children that was

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so close that Hilde remained in touch with the Waldenbergs for the rest of their lives, enjoying family visits by Max and Miriam and their children. Neither Leo nor Adele Müller survived the Holocaust, and Hilde saved their Red Cross telegrams and onionskin letters, which are a part of the collection along with other documents. After this double loss, and the loss of her friend, fellow refugee Rudolph Falkenstein, the Waldenbergs helped Hilde to relocate to America with distant relatives. Eventually settled in a job in New York City, Hilde also worked at Breezy Hill, a German-Jewish summer resort in the Catskills. It was there she

met future husband Rudy Miller and then began her life in Buffalo, NY.

*This brief article provides just a small sampling of the rich materials included within the papers of Rudy and Hilde Miller donated by their daughter Evelyn Miller Weinstein. A detailed guide (finding aid) is available online through the BJE website at [www.bjebuffalo.org](http://www.bjebuffalo.org) under the Jewish Buffalo Archives Project tab. Our thanks to Evie Weinstein for making these papers available for research. To learn more about this and other papers, you can contact Chana Kotzin at [archivesproject@bjebuffalo.org](mailto:archivesproject@bjebuffalo.org), or 716-204-5388.*

## EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN!

*By Ethel Melzer,  
Director of Adult Education, Bureau of Jewish Education*

The phrase “everything old is new again” does not only apply to the fashion industry and to household furnishings. It can also apply to courses and classes that the Bureau of Jewish Education’s Adult Education Department offers.

In keeping with the usual pattern of Adult Education course offerings, you can find some that have been repeated for the past several years. The **Introduction to Judaism course**, co-sponsored by the Buffalo Board of Rabbis and the BJE, is one example of “old but new.” The curriculum and subject matter are the same, but Rabbi Jonathan Freirich, who just joined the clergy team at Temple Beth Zion, will join the four other community rabbis who teach the course as the new instructor. We welcome him to Buffalo and to the fall session of 14 classes that begin on Wednesday, September 7 – December 21 from 7:30 – 9:30 pm at the Jewish Community Center on North Forest Road.

**Hebrew Reading: Both Beginner and Intermediate/Advanced classes** will once again be taught by Michal Shmuel-Lewis on 26 Wednesday nights at the JCC. Although the Hebrew language is very old – presented by Michal’s innovative teaching style that includes Hebrew culture and the Israeli lifestyle – the letters and the words come alive and everything becomes new to the classroom students.

Ten Thursday afternoon **Bible as Literature – Part Two** classes with Professor Ted Steinberg will begin on

Thursday, September 15 – November 17 from 1 – 2:30 pm at the JCC. This course will once again enlighten students on one of the oldest books that exist – yet the focus on four new chapters of the Bible: Deuteronomy, Samuel, The Song of Songs and the Book of Daniel will bring to light several new and exciting points.

The very popular five-part **Lecture Series with UB and its Department of Jewish Thought** will be held again, however, the subject matter this year is new! The theme of ‘JUSTICE in Jewish Thought and Tradition’ will be featured in each lecture given by the five professors. Their talks will take place at the JCC from 7:00 to 8:30 pm, beginning Thursday October 20 and will continue on various dates throughout the year.

Surely, we would all agree that the Yiddish language is a very old language that Jews have used to communicate for hundreds of years. The BJE Adult Education Department is pleased to be able to offer a new course: **Keeping Yiddish Alive – Basic Yiddish 101**. Professor Ted Steinberg will be teaching on 22 Sunday mornings, from 10:30 – 12 Noon at the JCC beginning on Sunday, September 18 – March 26.

*For more information or to register for any of these “old but new” courses, please contact Ethel Melzer, Director of the BJE Adult Education Department at 716-204-5380 or [ethel@bjebuffalo.org](mailto:ethel@bjebuffalo.org) or go to the BJE website: [www.bjebuffalo.org/adulted](http://www.bjebuffalo.org/adulted)*

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